

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the remarks that follow.

Claim Status

Claims 2-4 and 8-17 are pending in this application. Claims 3 and 11-17 have been objected to. Claims 2, 4 and 8-10 have been rejected. By this amendment, claim 3 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer and claims 2 and 8 are amended. No new matter has been introduced.

Claim Objections

Claims 3 and 11-17 have been indicated as including allowable subject matter but have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. (See Office Action, page 5, ¶ 4.)

Claims 11-17 depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 8 that has been amended to include the feature of claim 3, which the Examiner has indicated contains allowable subject matter. Applicant has canceled claim 3 to render the objection as to it, moot.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, claims 11-17 are believed allowable. Applicant respectfully requests that the foregoing objections be withdrawn as being overcome or otherwise rendered moot.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 2, 4 and 8-10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,529,667 to Nashimoto ("Nashimoto").

Applicant respectfully disagrees with the characterization of the pending claims and of the prior art in the stated rejections, and traverses these rejections.

Applicant has not substantively addressed the rejection of claims 2, 4 and 8-10 as stated in the January 11, 2006 Office Action and reserves the right to address the substance of such rejections in the future as necessary and/or appropriate.

Applicant has herein amended independent claims 2 and 8 to include the feature of claim 3, which the Examiner has indicated contains allowable subject matter. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that amended claims 2 and 8, and claims 4, 9 and 10 depending therefrom, are believed allowable.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, the invention as recited in the claims presented herein is believed patentably distinct over the art of record. Applicant respectfully requests that the respective objections and/or rejections be withdrawn and the application be allowed as the application is believed to be hereby placed in condition for allowance.

If any outstanding issues remain, however, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number below.

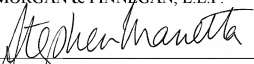
While no fees or extension of time are believed necessary for this Amendment, should an extension of time be required for the timely submission of this paper, such extension is hereby petitioned, and the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for this Amendment, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-5184.

An early and favorable examination on the merits is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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Dated: March 29, 2006

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